

SECRET A *Jefferies (B)*
LETTER

FROM A LATE *3939.aa.b.*
1-8,

ROMAN CATHOLICK

TO A FORMER

CONFESSOR,

CONCERNING HIS

Leaving the Romish Profession.



L O N D O N :

Printed by W. STRAHAN, and Sold by J. TRYE;
near *Gray's-Inn-Gate, Holbourn*, and at the
FOUNDERY, near *Upper Moorfields*. 1743.

To the READER.

1. **A**S soon as I providentially heard the Rev'd Mr. John Wesley preach free, universal Salvation by Faith in Jesus Christ alone, necessarily productive of all manner of good Works, it pleased the Lord mercifully to open my Eyes, to shake my carnal Security, and shew me the Weakness of the Doctrine of that pretended infallible Church I had so long profest myself a Member of.

2. Amaz'd to find I had hitherto known nothing of Christianity, till it pleased the Guide of good Men and Angels to bring me within the Sound of this godly Man's Voice, I could not help saying with Joy, This is the Lord's Doing, and it is marvellous in our Eyes. Since what the Wit and Eloquence of many learned Men in Cambridge, where, by Licence of the Vice-chancellor, I had taught the French Language near two Years, could not do with all the Force of Argument, God had done in an Hour. We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.

3. Finding, after strictly searching the Oracles of God to see if Things were really so, that what this zealous Champion for the Lord of Hosts taught from the Pulpit, and what he had wrote in his Sermon on Salvation by Faith, preached before the University of Oxford; and in his Discourse on the Doctrine of Salvation, Faith and good Works, was exactly consonant to the Dictates of the Holy Ghost; yet contrary to the dogmatical Faith of the great Council of Trent, the very Bulwark and Standard of the Church of Rome; I was struck with Admiration, and thoroughly convinced, that unless I believed and felt what he, or rather God thro' him, laid down for true Christianity, I should be damned, in Spight of all my good Works, Confessions, Indulgencies, holy Perigrinations, and Absolutions.

4. But how did I stifle this Conviction? I fled and hid myself near two Years, till it pleased God once more to bring the Prodigal back, after much Sorrow and Tribulation both in Body and Mind to the Voice of his Minister. Let me be, O God, thy Crown of rejoicing at the great Day!



DAVID JEFFERIES.

A

L E T T E R

From a late

Roman Catholick, &c.

S I R,

I Doubt not but you may yet perfectly remember how often we prais'd, when we were beyond Seas, the regular Oeconomy of our Worship, and admired the sweet Harmony of all the religious Orders of Men and Women in the Church; how emulous we were of their seemingly happy State, and apparent Contentment, particularly of — who outwardly appeared, at least to us, mortify'd Men, truly covetous of Eternity, prodigal of this miserable Life, and certain of a future in the Mansions of Holiness. Likewise, how I propos'd to you the following plain Questions.

(1.) Whether a Penitent had not Power to change one spiritual Director for a more spiritual, were he Roman Catholic, or Protestant Catholic?

(2.) Whether any Gentleman Student in foreign Universities might not, when he

pleased, transmigrate from one College to another, for the Sake of abler Tutors, Masters, or Guardians?

2. These Queries, or the Subject of Matter of them, you candidly answered in the affirmative, and honestly told me, if I remember well, Our Church could by no Means help dispensing with one strict Life for a stricter, be it where it will, in *Rome*, or in *London*.

3. This fair Confession of the Truth emboldens me to declare, even to you, my ancient ghostly Father, and to all Men, whether Romish Catholics, Church of *England* Catholics, or *Geneva* Catholics, that from a strict and impartial View of my past Life, I at present find myself indispensibly obliged to alter my Course, and by his Help pave the Road for a thorough Reformation.

4. However, tho' I have rejected you and all my former Guides for one I experimentally know to be much more spiritual, yet I would not have you think I have conceived a Pique at you, or any Individual of your Church; neither would I have you rash in judging your supposed degenerate Son, because I still profess myself united with the regenerate Part of your Church, as well as with the Regenerate of the Church of *England* or Church of *Scotland*, being fully persuaded bare Names change not the Nature and Essence of Things.

On

5. On the contrary, the Step I have taken, following nakedly a naked Redeemer, springs from a strong Conviction, that tho' I have zealously visited the Thresholds of the holy Apostles *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, had the Blessing and Absolution of the present Pope in Person, all the Indulgencies granted to Pilgrims personally praying before the Shrines, and at the Sepulchres of the Saints and Christian-Martyrs; tho' I have paid my Devotions also to the *Regina & porta cæli, refugiumque peccatorum*, Queen and Gate of Heaven, and Refuge of Sinners at *Loretto* (Such were the Names I gave thy holy Mother according to the Flesh, O thou King and Gate of Heaven, and only immediate Refuge of all the sinful World.)

6. Tho' I have kiss'd the very Bricks of her Nazarine Chamber, whose Cieling, Sides and Cornishes are cover'd with Gold, Silver, and precious Stones; the Gifts of Popes, Emperors and Kings, I still find myself as abominable in the Sight of God, as if I had never stirr'd out of my native Country; and that with all my Confessions of my Sins, to you and the Penitentiary Priests both at *Rome* and *Loretto*, who have the Pope's own Power of the Keys to absolve all Sinners whatever from all Crimes whatever, I knew nothing of Jesus Christ and him crucified, but wholly ignorant of true inward of Religion, and regenerated

Holiness, without which a Form of Godliness will avail us little in the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

7. I believe indeed you acted according to the Light you had in teaching me, to mumble with my Lips, a few Prayers to God, or the Virgin-Mother, levelling her with the Blessed *Jesus* every time I utter'd from the Breviary

Nos cum Prole Pia,

Benedicat Virgo Maria,

Jesus bless us, and *Mary* bless us : or, Let *Mary* bless us, with her holy Offspring.

8. But all this had not the least Effect on my corrupt Heart ; for I lived according to Man, I thought of Time not of Eternity, I knew no Felicity but my Belly ; I was arrogant, bold, haughty, proud, ambitious, impudent, unmerciful, unjust, hard-hearted, untractable, inconstant, fickle, contentious, obstinate, curious, rebellious, disobedient : a Lyar, a Swearer, a Drunkard, a Fornicator, a Blasphemer, a Scoffer, a Hypocrite ; I was treacherous, I was ungrateful, a great Admirer and Lover of myself ; yet in the midst of all, I was told by you and some of my other Ghostly Fathers, that I should get to Heaven by performing your Injunctions. Perhaps you will say, I had many Opportunities abroad of amending my ill-spent Life. But I beg you would not be surpriz'd if I ask you where ? I presume you mean in
some

some religious Convent? Nay ; but unless God touch the Heart, all the Discipline of a monastical Life, will help but little in the Conversion of a Sinner ; *Conversio Cordis*, the Conversion of the Heart to God. Consequently,

'Tis not the Desert, or the Cell,

Can bide me from my Pain :

I carry with me my own Hell,

While Self and Pride remain.

9. For I myself have been staggering with Liquor, more than once, in the Seraphical Habit, so called, of *St. Francis*, which I wore Night and Day from *June 24, 1732*, till *August 1733*, at *Douay* in *French Flanders* : The Truth of what I say is known to many now in *London*, who then wore the same Dress.

10. Now where would you send me, beyond Seas, to learn a Christian Life, if your strictest Orders be as much given to Wine, Gluttony and Swearing, with their consequent Vices, as any unbelieving Worldling?

11. Even in *London* where, of all Men, Missionary Priests ought to be the most exact, and careful of their Character, I could send you (if you have not already been amongst them) to a publick Rendezvous, known both to Superiors and Inferiors, where you may find them most Nights, gaming, guzzling, and swearing with as much *Gout* as any Protestant Carman.

I

But

12. But must I thence infer, because the Conventual and Eremitical Clergy of the *Romish* Persuasion lead such Lives, that there are no real Christians upon Earth? God forbid; I know, God has even in this City, who by his Grace, walk in Simplicity, study Self-denial and Mortification, gladly suffer the Shame, Reproach, and Contempt of this World, for the Name of *Jesus* the Captain of their Salvation; hate their own Ease, regard no temporal Things, renounce all, without vowing *Franciscan* Poverty; fly the World, without running to the Desert, or the Cell; curb the Desires of the Flesh, without the help of Disciplines; and place all their Happiness in God alone, by whom they are what they are, in Meekness, Love, and Brotherly Charity; in Patience and Long-suffering.

13. Yet how far are these from taking Glory to themselves, according to that Doctrine of your Church, contained in the 24th Canon of the 6th Session of the Council of *Trent*, in these very Words: *Si quis dixerit, bona Opera Fructus solummodo, & Signa esse Justificationis adeptæ, non autem ipsius Causam, Anathema sit.* If any one shall say, that good Works are no more than the Fruits of Justification, and not the Cause thereof, let him be accursed. Yea, Lord, I readily submit to be anathematiz'd by this Council, and all its Adherents, rather than chal-

challenge to myself any Part of my Salvation so wonderfully wrought out and purchased by thy dear Son, in whom we have Redemption thro' his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins. When I followed you, I believ'd you the best of Men. But I have now found those who are what you only seem'd. Nor will it avail to say, that all Hereticks, at their first setting out, affect a particular Sanctity of Life, by which, like Wolves in true Sheep's Cloathing, they may the more easily delude the Ignorant. For those of whom I speak are no Hereticks at all (unless as you term all Protestants so.) No. All Hereticks deviate from some fundamental Point, or Doctrine of the true Christianity taught in Scripture. Whereas these do all vehemently hold the common Principles of Christianity. The plain, old Christianity, that, they teach and stand to, detesting all other Marks of Distinction, but to be inwardly and outwardly conform'd to the holy Will of God as reveal'd in his Written Word.

14. I have neither Leisure, Inclination nor Ability to enter with you into the Depth of the Controversy between the Church of *England*, whereof I have for some time profess'd myself, and the Church of *Rome*. Only permit me to ask, if we be regenerated and born anew by the Holy Ghost, believing all that is written in the holy Scripture, need
we

we fear being lost because we give not equal Credit to Oral Traditions?

15. If we make a Conscience of sincerely worshipping God, the Sovereign Dispenser of all good Gifts, shall we perish because we render no religious Worship; Reverence call it *Dulia*, *Hyperdulia*, or by whatever Name you please, to Relicks, Images, Pictures?

16. If we pray to God with our Hearts, as well as with our Lips, as our Blessed Saviour has taught us, shall we incur his Displeasure because we invoke no Saint or Angel?

No other Help I know,

If I withdraw myself from thee,

Ab! whither shall I go?

17. If we, according to Christ's own Institution, receive the holy Communion of his Body and Blood in both Kinds, shall we for so doing, draw upon us the dreadful Anger of a just God, because the Council of *Constance* robb'd us of the Cup? Which indeed the good Council of *Trent* restored, if the Pope will acquiesce in their gracious Grant.

18. Let God, Sir, be true and every Man a Lyar, who dares assert in spite of the Word of God, that he who believes and is baptiz'd, whether in *Rome*, *Paris*, *London* or *Madrid*; or whether he be in Communion with the Pope, or Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, shall not be sav'd: Or that he who believes not, whether in *Rome*, *Paris*,
London,

London, or *Madrid*; or whether he be in Communion with the Pope, or Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, shall not be damn'd.

19. I desire to confess to all Mankind my Confidence and Dependance on Christ alone, for Redemption, without the Intercession of Saints or Angels; I desire we may provoke one another to good Works, without laying the least Stress on them for our Salvation, because such a Gift is not given us for what we do, or have done, but for what Christ has been most mercifully pleased to do for us, and still does at the Right Hand of God the Father. Not to us Lord Jesus, not to us but to thy Death and Passion, be all the Glory for ever and ever, Amen. I desire to join all the Faithful upon Earth, and the innumerable Company of Saints and Angels in Heaven, in praising the common Lord of all the World, whose Love, forfeited by the Sin of *Adam* our Head and Representative, Christ has regain'd even to the Ungodly, and him that worketh not, by his precious Blood, which justifies every one that sincerely turns to God through him. And unless God the Father accept us in the Beloved, in whom he is well pleased with all the returning, self-condemn'd Sinners, we with all our good Works, Absolutions and Indulgencies, must go quick into Hell.

Away

20. Away then with our Merits; away with the super-abundant Works of religious Men and Women, which of themselves can neither save the Doer, nor help others; I desire Christ may be all in all to me, to whom be Glory, Honour, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for ever, *Amen.*

Yours, DAVID JEFFERIES.

